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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: UKRAINE: POSSIBLE RESOLUTION OF FOREIGN MINISTER
TARASYUK'S STATUS IN SIGHT?

REF: KYIV 4433

Classified By: Political Counselor Kent Logsdon, reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Party of Regions MPs forcibly prevented Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk from attending the weekly cabinet meeting December 20, initiating a scuffle at the Cabinet of Ministers' building with several Our Ukraine (OU) MPs who had arrived in support of Tarasyuk. Yushchenko's representative to the Cabinet, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, walked out in protest of the Cabinet's refusal to admit Tarasyuk. PM Viktor Yanukovych told the press later that President Viktor Yushchenko should nominate an acting Foreign Minister, suggesting that the Rada (parliament) would act if Yushchenko did not. Yanukovych's Chief of Staff Serhiy Lyovochkin told Ambassador that he and Yushchenko's Chief of Staff Viktor Baloha had reached a tentative compromise, subject to Yushchenko's approval, which could lead to Presidential Secretariat deputy head Oleksandr Chaliy replacing Tarasyuk

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as early as December 21, prior to Russian President Putin's December 22 visit to Kyiv. Yushchenko's reaction to the proposed deal remains unknown as of COB December 20.

¶2. (C) Comment: Chaliy has been rumored as Tarasyuk's likely replacement for months, even before he joined the Presidential Secretariat in September. While Yushchenko has publicly backed Tarasyuk's status as FM repeatedly in the past several weeks, Baloha was notably lukewarm after the December 1 Rada vote, suggesting publicly Tarasyuk would accept the Rada decision (reftel), leading to sustained press speculation that the Presidential Secretariat preferred Tarasyuk's exit. While the proposed compromise could resolve the thorny issue of Tarasyuk's fate prior to Putin's scheduled December 22 visit and offer a possible face-saving way out for Yushchenko, it would not resolve the larger institutional jostling between the President and Prime Minister's teams. Although both sides continue to insist that they seek compromise and cooperation rather than conflict, the war of words and struggle for power advantage will continue, even though we expect it may temporarily quiet down during the upcoming Ukrainian holiday season which runs through January 15 (Old New Year). End Summary and Comment.

An unseemly scuffle at the Cabinet

¶3. (SBU) FM Borys Tarasyuk, armed with the court order reinstating him as Foreign Minister in the wake of the December 1 Rada vote to dismiss him, arrived for the weekly Cabinet meeting December 20 in the company of several OU MPs. For the second time in December, he failed to gain access. Tarasyuk had been prevented from attending a December 6 Cabinet meeting by the Minister of the Cabinet of Ministers Tolstoukhov. This time, a group of Regions MPs blocked Tarasyuk at the door, leading to a heated verbal exchange and

shoving match outside the Cabinet of Ministers.

¶4. (SBU) Inside the Cabinet meeting room, Presidential Secretariat deputy head Yatsenyuk, Yushchenko's

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representative to the Cabinet, argued in vain to convince the Cabinet to allow Tarasyuk to attend. Yatsenyuk subsequently walked out of the meeting in protest, telling journalists outside: "I tried to convince members of the government to allow him to attend as a way out of the conflict; unfortunately, they refused to listen to me." OU's Mykola Katerynychuk, who accompanied Tarasyuk to the meeting, denounced the action by Regions' MPs as an act of hooliganism which represented "a direct attack on presidential powers."

Yanukovych's demand, a potential compromise?

¶5. (SBU) After the Cabinet meeting, Yanukovych told the press that the Cabinet had discussed the barring of Tarasyuk from attending and suggested Yushchenko should appoint an acting foreign minister, adding: "if the President does not select one, the Rada should decide on this."

¶6. (C) Yanukovych's Chief of Staff Lyovochkin told Ambassador later December 20 that he and Head of the Presidential Secretariat Baloha had reached a tentative deal to resolve

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the impasse over the Foreign Minister. Noting that Baloha still needed to gain Yushchenko's approval, Lyovochkin said that the proposed deal, which would acknowledge Presidential prerogative in determining who serves as Foreign Minister while meeting Yanukovych's demand for Tarasyuk's removal, would involve:

-- The Rada withdrawing its December 1 dismissal of Tarasyuk;
-- Yushchenko forwarding a request to the Rada to dismiss Tarasyuk, followed by a Rada vote to accept the request,

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combined with:

-- Yushchenko proposing Chaliy's nomination as FM, which the Rada would approve.

¶7. (C) Lyovochkin said that he and Baloha would need to work closely with Rada officials to facilitate the various actions being completed, ideally December 21, in advance of Putin's pending visit to Kyiv December 22. (note: Putin's dislike of Tarasyuk is well known. Tarasyuk was previously dismissed as FM in August 2000 by then President Kuchma in the wake of a Kuchma-Putin meeting in Yalta. Two other GOU officials dismissed at the same time, rumored to have been at Putin's request for being anti-Russian, were then MFA Political Director (and current deputy Foreign Minister) Andriy Veselovsky and then head of Military Intelligence Ihor Smeshko.)

¶8. (SBU) Note: as of COB December 20, there was no word from the Presidential Secretariat on the results of the Baloha-Yushchenko meeting and whether Yushchenko would accept the deal outlined by Lyovochkin.

¶9. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kyiv.
Taylor